

APPOINTING ELECTION INSPECTORS

- An election inspector must be a registered voter of the county in which he or she is appointed to serve. To accommodate jurisdictions that cross county boundaries, Michigan election law provides that an individual registered to vote in a local unit of government that falls in more than one county may be appointed to serve on any precinct board established within the local unit of government.
- Election inspector appointments must be handled by the local board of election commissioners at least 21 days but not more than 40 days before each election. The appointments cannot be made less than five days before the date set for holding an election inspector instructional session.
- At least three election inspectors must be appointed to serve in each precinct; additional inspectors must be appointed if needed to properly conduct the election. The election commission must designate one of the election inspectors appointed to each board as chairperson of the board. The first three inspectors appointed to serve on a precinct board must be 18 years of age or older; any additional precinct inspectors appointed to the board may be 16 or 17 years of age. A precinct inspector appointee must be at least 18 years of age to serve as the chairperson of the precinct board.
- The election commission is required to appoint at least 1 election inspector for each major political party.” In addition, the election commission is required to politically balance each precinct board “as nearly as possible.” A “major political party” is defined as “each of the political parties whose candidates for the office of secretary of state received the highest and second highest number of votes at the immediately preceding general election in which a secretary of state was elected.” (Current “major political parties” are the Republican Party and the Democratic Party.) The election commission may appoint election inspector applicants who have expressed a preference for a minor political party at its discretion.
- The election commission is prohibited from knowingly appointing an individual to serve as an election inspector if the person has been convicted of a felony or election crime or if any member of the person’s “immediate family” is a candidate for nomination or election to any office at the election. (“Immediate family” is defined as the individual’s “father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, and spouse and a relative of any degree residing in the same household as that individual.”) As an exception, a precinct delegate candidate may serve as an election inspector in any precinct other than the precinct in which he or she resides.
- An election commission is further prohibited from appointing a person as an election inspector “if that person declares a political party preference for a political party but is a known active advocate of another political party.” A “known active advocate” of another political party is defined to mean a person who 1.) is a delegate to the convention or an officer of another party 2.) is affiliated with another party through an elected or appointed government position or 3.) has made documented public statements (i.e., “statements

reported by the news media or written statements with a clear and unambiguous attribution to the applicant”) specifically supporting by name another political party or its candidates in the same calendar year as the election for which the appointment is being made.

- Not later than 2 business days following the appointment of election inspectors for an election scheduled to nominate or elect candidates to a federal or state office, the election commission is required to notify the county chair of each major political party of the “names and political party affiliations of appointed election inspectors and the precincts to which those inspectors were appointed.” The notification must be made by “certified mail, personal service, or electronic transmission capable of determining date of receipt.”

Training Election Inspectors

Michigan election law, MCL 168.683, provides the following:

“Each county clerk prior to each primary and election shall, by some reliable means, notify the clerk of each township and city in the county of a training school for election inspectors to be held at a place designated by the county clerk within 20 days prior to each primary, general and special election. The township and city clerks shall notify each election inspector appointed to serve at that election of the time and place of such training school. At such meeting, the county clerk shall instruct and demonstrate the manner in which the duties of election inspectors are required by law to be performed. It shall be the duty of the inspectors, so notified, to attend such meeting unless excused by the county clerk for good cause. Compensation may be paid them therefor by their respective municipalities at such rate as may be determined by the governing bodies. No inspector of election shall serve in any election unless he shall have within the last preceding 2 years either attended an election school or shall have passed satisfactorily an examination given by the election commission of the city, township or village in which appointed. The examination shall be subject to the approval of the secretary of state. This section shall not prevent the appointment of an inspector of election to fill a vacancy. This section shall not prohibit any city or any township having a population of 10,000 or more from conducting its own training school for election inspectors of that city or township in which case election inspectors who have attended such school shall not be required to attend the county training school.”

Michigan election law, MCL 168.33, provides the following:

“(1) The director of elections shall conduct training schools throughout this state preceding the general November election, and preceding such other elections as the director considers advisable, for county clerks and their representatives with respect to the conducting of elections in accordance with the election laws. In case any county clerk shall fail to conduct in his or her county a training school for election boards within the county, the director of elections shall conduct such training school, the cost of the training school to be charged as an obligation of the county.

“(2) The director of elections shall train all county, city, and township clerks who are involved in the training of precinct inspectors. The training shall include team training and monitoring of their performance as trainers.

“(3) The director of elections shall conduct all precinct inspector training in counties where the clerk has not been accredited to conduct the training schools.”

Coordinating Election Inspector Training Programs

While Michigan election law, MCL 168.683 stipulates that the county clerk is responsible for training election inspectors appointed to administer elections scheduled in the county, a “team approach” to the training responsibility is recommended. Suggestions:

- With the county clerk acting in a coordinating capacity, develop an election inspector training team responsible for the ongoing conduct of election inspector training programs. Include experienced local clerks and election personnel who are skilled in making presentations, seasoned election inspectors and any outside resource persons available to participate in the programs. If a county level clerks’ association is established, develop and maintain the training team as an association function if practicable.
- Use the training materials provided by the Bureau as the foundation for your training program. Augment the materials as needed in your county.
- Strive for constant improvement in the training programs. Discard approaches that fail to work; search for new ideas that will enhance the quality and content of programs. Seek suggestions from those who attend the programs.
- Build variety into the training programs to keep attendees focused. Emphasize hands-on exercises, role-playing and activities that work to engage the attendees in the instruction. Examples: have attendees take turns on a “mock” election board and have other attendees pose as voters with routine problems and needs; offer hands-on instruction on sealing ballot containers; set up and demonstrate the voting system the attendees will use on election day and allow them to operate the equipment.
- If a variety of different voting systems are used in the county, conduct separate training programs for each system.
- Develop a certificate that can be awarded to graduating election inspectors.

Follow-Up Support

- Bureau staff will be available to provide any consultative advice or assistance required in the establishment of your election inspectors’ instructional program.
- The materials provided through the Bureau to assist with the instruction of election inspectors will be regularly updated and expanded.

- Communications on training election inspectors will be regularly distributed through the Bureau to keep you abreast of innovative training ideas and approaches; law changes that need to be highlighted to election inspectors; and newly developed training aids and materials. Please share your ideas and your successes!